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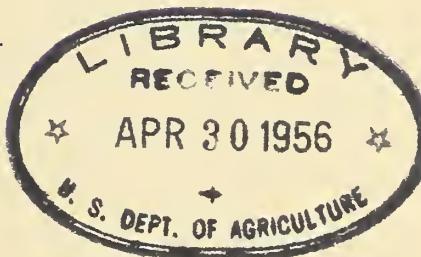


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FARMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE  
UNITED STATES EMPLOYMENT SERVICE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

U.S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics. <sup>Under</sup>  
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This report is one in a special series relating to farmers' attitudes toward the farm labor situation in a sample of counties where demands are heavy for seasonal workers in vegetable and sugar beet crops. Among the 573 farmers interviewed in the month of June in 16 states in 22 counties, only 84 had sought to obtain workers from U.S.E.S. for their spring work. Among the factors keeping many farmers from making greater use of the Farm Placement Service are the following:

Life-long habits of hiring on a personal and informal basis

A belief that U.S.E.S. can't supply enough farm workers

A belief that this agency can't supply certain types of workers

Reluctance to hire workers who utilize the services of U.S.E.S.

Dissatisfaction with workers or service provided by U.S.E.S. in other years

A belief that U.S.E.S. tends to lessen the farmer's prerogatives as an employer

A belief that U.S.E.S. offices are too far away

Lack of knowledge of this agency and its Farm Placement Service

Wider utilization of the services of the U.S.E.S. may be brought about by the appointment of volunteer community representatives, a plan now being carried into effect in some counties. This plan brings the Farm Placement Service into closer accord with farmers' customary hiring habits and reduces the effects exerted by distance as an obstacle to full use of the Service.

It is suggested that more farmers might be supplied with workers by U.S.E.S. if the benefits of social security legislation could be extended to farm workers, and if reporting to U.S.E.S. offices were made a condition for eligibility, as is now the case in occupations included in the Unemployment Compensation Program.

Recruitment of farm workers by U.S.E.S. for transportation to areas of impending shortages might be carried on more effectively if FSA could be provided with additional funds for housing farm workers in such areas. The reluctance of workers to go into areas where adequate housing facilities are lacking for their families has been an important factor in producing labor shortages encountered in some of the counties studied in this survey, according to statements of some of the farmers.

Federal funds might be made available to U.S.E.S. for defraying costs of transporting workers for distances up to 200 miles rather than placing this cost upon farmers. Eligibility for such transportation might include the provision that workers shall report to U.S.E.S. offices for referrals.

Measures might also be taken to correct misapprehensions about the Farm Placement Service and to inform farmers how most effectively to use this Service in filling their labor needs. Some of these measures are given consideration in this report.



## FARMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

This report is based upon the statements of 673 farmers interviewed on their farms during the month of June 1942. Schedules were taken in 16 states in the 22 counties marked on the accompanying map. Counties were selected on the basis of production of crops having high labor requirements, 12 being chosen as important producers of fresh vegetables, and the other 10 as major sugar beet producers. Few of the farmers in our sample grew these special crops only, although in most instances their major labor requirements were in these intensive crops. Attitudes toward the U. S. E. S. were inquired into, as one phase of a larger study of farmers' attitudes toward the farm labor situation. Other aspects of this study have been discussed in earlier reports in this special series.

Of the 673 farmers interviewed, 484 had employed seasonal laborers this spring, but only 84 had sought to obtain workers from U. S. E. S. for their spring work, according to their statements. What are the reasons why so few of these farmers used the Farm Placement Service of the U. S. E. S.? Surely, it was not lack of need for the service since almost one-third of all the farmers interviewed reported that they had been unable to hire as many workers as they had sought for their spring work. Some of the farmers obtained workers from the sugar companies and a lesser number from the canneries, but most of the workers hired were obtained from neither of these sources.

The explanation of the limited use made of the facilities of U. S. E. S. appears to lie largely in the attitudes of farmers toward hiring, toward the U. S. E. S., toward the workers this agency has listed for farm employment, and in a lack of knowledge about U. S. E. S. If the urgent need for effective utilization of manpower available for farm employment is to be met, it is imperative that the states of mind preventing full use of the facilities of U. S. E. S. shall be understood, and that measures shall be taken to bring about greater use of farm placement services in 1943.

LIFE-LONG HABITS OF HIRING ON A PERSONAL AND INFORMAL BASIS kept many farmers from going to U. S. E. S. offices this year. Rarely has it been necessary in the past for farmers to seek the aid of an employment agency, public or private, since they could almost always hire a sufficient number of workers from among those who came looking for jobs. When it happened that enough workers did not come asking for work, farmers could learn from neighbors the names and personal characteristics of unemployed or under-employed persons who could be hired. Then, too, farmers could "just look around town" for workers and usually find them. Most of the farmers who continued



to rely upon customary methods of hiring were able this year to find workers, although they often had difficulty in doing so. The following comments of farmers illustrate their habitual methods of seeking workers and are taken from replies to the question, "How did you go about getting your workers this spring":<sup>1/</sup>

"I looked around for them, borrowed Mexicans from a neighbor. My full-time man came and asked for a job."

"My son-in-law gathered a crew in his truck."

"I got them out of Gibbon - Just happened to run into them."

"I got a neighbor."

"I go to town and to auto camps and pick up workers - spent two days looking for an irrigator. I couldn't get any more irrigators - had to do some of the night irrigation myself. So far, I've skinned by and got what I needed."

"I got a sugar contract in order to get labor. We were ready to throw up the sponge until that chance came."

"It took a lot of looking and inquiring."

A BELIEF THAT U.S.E.S. CAN'T SUPPLY ENOUGH FARM WORKERS kept some of the farmers from using the services of this agency. The prevalence of this belief can be explained in part by the finding that 60 percent of those farmers who had requested workers of U.S.E.S. this spring were supplied with none, according to their statements. When farmers are told by neighbors that they have been unable to obtain workers from U.S.E.S., they readily conclude that it is useless to go there. Sometimes the local newspaper carries a story that U.S.E.S. is unable to supply farmers with workers needed for seasonal operations. Illustrative of this belief are the following replies of farmers:

<sup>1/</sup> When comments are cited in this report, they are in most instances in the exact words of the farmer; at times the interviewers have paraphrased or condensed the statements. No two comments in any series in this report are from the same county except in one instance where all the comments are specifically described as having been made by farmers in a single county.



"The government office did not have any laborers to supply."

"They didn't have any."

"It's useless. They can't supply day labor."

"It was no use because the office couldn't supply them anyway."

"Not in 1942. Didn't figure I could get any."

"The papers stated they were unable to supply thinners of any type."

"I heard other people say you couldn't get them."

A BELIEF IS WIDESPREAD THAT U.S.E.S. CAN'T SUPPLY CERTAIN TYPES OF WORKERS. The farm operations requiring most labor in vegetable and sugar beet areas are those involving hand work and much bending-over or crawling on hands and knees - commonly known as "stoop labor." Many Mexicans, Filipinos, Japanese, Negroes, recent immigrants, and children are employed because, having few opportunities for higher paid jobs, they will do hand work in the fields for small wages. Moreover, the truck crop growers declare that prevailing price levels do not permit them to pay wages high enough to attract other workers. Many of these farmers said that U.S.E.S. could not supply the types of workers indicated by these statements:

"Yes, you can get regular ranch hands from them but no asparagus cutters. None of the type needed - Filipino asparagus cutters."

"I prefer Japanese help and the Government does not supply help of that kind."

"We don't seem to get any help from that. But our colored help don't know about the Service and so there isn't much they can do except maybe sometime get a family down from Georgia - help bring them down."

"I felt that this office couldn't get beet labor any cheaper than I was able to."

"I figured I'd get along with kids - mature laborers ask for too much money."



Many of these farmers also want to hire workers possessing skills - e.g. - men who can operate and repair power-driven machines, who are experienced in caring for dairy herds, who know how to irrigate a field, or who can perform a wide variety of farm operations with little supervision or instruction. These men are likely also to have skills wanted by war industries and the armed forces. Since alternative opportunities at higher wages exist for such men, the difficulty U.S. E.S. offices frequently appear to have in supplying skilled workers to farmers is understandable. Illustrative of the belief that U. S. E. S. cannot supply workers possessing special skills are the following comments of farmers:

"Well the fellow that I did get from the U. S. E. S. can't drive a truck, can't cultivate, can't use a horse - he's willing but he can't do much."

"That's my last resort. I don't go there because I figure the kind of workers there wouldn't be worth hiring."

"The fellow we got didn't know how to do anything. You had to keep after him all the time and see that he did it right. The only men you can get from there are fellows who can't get a job any place else."

RELUCTANCE TO HIRE WORKERS THROUGH U. S. E. S. exists in the minds of many farmers. Many farmers think it is wrong for workers to go to an employment agency instead of going directly to farmers to obtain work, and even more blameworthy for a man who has a farm job to go to U.S.E.S. in search of a better one. Moreover, it is considered a reflection on the initiative of a man if he seeks help in finding a job, particularly in times when work can easily be had. This is the idea that a man who wants work will find it - those who can't find work don't really want to work. Bidding among farmers for the services of a worker is viewed by many farmers as unethical, but U.S.E.S. must take account of the worker's wage requirements in making referrals, sending men first to farmers willing to meet the wage demands of the workers available. These patterns of thought appear to underlie many of the derogatory comments of farmers about workers listed by the U.S.E.S.:

"Most of the time those guys are not worth hauling home."

"Those men who come from the employment office are floaters. They only want to work at one job for awhile, then move on."

"They didn't have anyone that's fit to work on a farm - just bums."

"That's my last resort. I don't go there because I figure the kind of workers there wouldn't be worth hiring. Any worker worth anything would be out here working anyway."



"I didn't need enough workers to fool with the government employment office."

"No, didn't need to. You don't know what you get from those places."

"No. They demand too high wages and I've always been able to get men."

PREJUDICE AGAINST FORMER WPA WORKERS LISTED BY U. S. E. S. is evident in the statements of many farmers. Workers who have been on WPA projects are considered by these farmers as lacking in both ability and willingness to work. This attitude is particularly prevalent in southern counties where, more often than elsewhere, farmers said that the wages paid by WPA exceeded those in farm employment and raised unduly the expectations of workers. Some seemed, also, to view WPA as an agency which has disturbed the class structure by reducing the dependence of the Negro upon the planter. These attitudes are illustrated by the following replies of farmers:

"I don't think much of WPA'ers - rather do the work myself."

"I knew a man who got knifed by a Negro who was cut off 'cause he had asked for help from the government employment office, so I didn't mess with it."

"Mighty hard to get those unemployed people to work out on farms."

"No, because all the labor they can send you is someone who has been on WPA and he isn't worth going after."

"I'd sooner do every damn kick of work myself than get labor from WPA."

"No. Other fellows tell me they send bums. Just stand on a shovel."

Interviewer's comments on schedules: This farmer feels that "the government agencies are out to help the Negro and destroy the base of Agriculture." Objects to treatment by employment offices which send him questionnaires to fill regarding employees who have registered. Says he fills them out honestly but usually adds a note saying the worker is indispensable to him. Then the next day, he says the worker is hired away from him on a project. Strongly objects to the "morbidity of this practice."



DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WORKERS OR SERVICE PROVIDED BY U. S. E. S. IN PREVIOUS YEARS kept some of the farmers interviewed from returning this year. When farmers complained at times about the service received, they did not mean to imply that the personnel of U. S. E. S. had been discourteous, inattentive, or unwilling to be helpful. The service of U. S. E. S. is "good" as most farmers judge it when the agency supplies promptly "good" workers. A worker is "good" if he can do the work he is hired to do, if he comes on time, works diligently, and stays until the job is done, if he is able and willing to work the long hours prevailing on farms, if he does not demand higher pay than the farmer thinks he should have, if he does not complain about the living conditions the farmer generally provides for his workers, and if his personal habits do not violate his employer's conceptions of what is proper in a worker.

Most common of the charges against workers obtained from U. S. E. S. was that the workers could not do the work they were hired to do . . . Next was the complaint that the workers did not stay with the farmer until the work for which they were hired was completed. Other frequent criticisms were that the workers were not diligent or did not come on time. Of the 86 farmers who had hired workers from the U. S. E. S. at some time, 45 reported that they were not satisfactory. In the present survey there were 58 farmers who reported contacts with the U. S. E. S. in other years but who did not return there this spring. Among the 50 farmers who expressed opinions on this point (8 did not do so), approximately two-thirds said that they were dissatisfied with the workers they had been sent by U. S. E. S.

The following comments of farmers about workers obtained from U. S. E. S. illustrate the variety of negative statements voiced by those who were dissatisfied with the workers referred to them: They are in reply to the question, "Were the workers obtained from the government employment office satisfactory?"

"No. The workers stayed a day or two and then left. Some of them knew nothing of farm work."

"Some were good, some were not. Some were migrants and usually were not used to hard work. Local workers were good."

"The kind of workers you get there don't stay and can't work - just a bunch of bums."

"Won't work. Was on WPA and has been ruined. Is lazy."

"No. The man talked too much and tried to shirk."



"No. The workers were not experienced."

"No damn good. Had to get rid of him."

"They stayed maybe a day - some two or three days. Said the sun was too hot, wages weren't high enough, work was too hard - and they didn't want to work anyway."

"No. Not dependable, misrepresented capabilities, and not willing to do hard work."

"Tried it years ago but never anymore. Never got anyone that's any good there."

"I got 35 men who wanted to work by the hour. Never had any luck with them. Always too lazy to work. Foreign class of people are the only kind that are any good."

"Might as well have left the tomatoes in the field. They picked green tomatoes and rotten ones. Didn't stay."

A BELIEF EXISTS THAT U.S. E. S. TENDS TO LESSEN THE FARMER'S PREROGATIVES AS AN EMPLOYER. Farmers want to "size up" a man before they hire him, and then adjust the pay offer on the basis of a personal judgment of the worker's capabilities. They don't want to say how much they will pay until they see and talk to the man to be hired. Many farmers pride themselves on their ability to judge a worker's worth and feel that this is something a farmer can do better than anyone else can. Of course, the farmer is not obliged to hire a man because he is referred by U. S. E. S. but it is less easy to refuse a man a job after he has come especially at some inconvenience to see the farmer and after the Farm Placement Supervisor has chosen him for referral. Farmers want to feel completely free to refuse a man a job on any ground whatsoever without accounting to anyone.

Hiring a man is often felt to be a highly personal matter, and it is sometimes difficult for a farmer to explain why he didn't want to hire a particular man - that he reminded him of someone who had worked for him years ago and was unsatisfactory, that the worker "looks lazy" or like a man who would "go on a drunk on Saturday night" or who would swear too often in front of the children, that he looked like he wouldn't "treat the animals right," or that he belonged to a disliked nationality group. Perhaps the farmer's facilities are such that the worker will eat and sleep in the farm home. The farmer will work with him in the field; he wants a man he can "talk to," who will be respectful and trustworthy. These considerations are especially important in hiring regular "year-round" workers, but some of them usually enter into hiring of seasonal workers too, particularly among those farmers who don't hire many men.



In the past a farmer felt that he conferred a favor upon a worker by hiring him, and the worker was expected to be grateful that he had been offered a job since they were often hard to find. The bargaining power of the farm worker was usually small; if he wanted a job he didn't try to do any bargaining. Now, what does the farm worker think when he has obtained a job through an employment agency? He is less likely than before to think, "This farmer gave me a job," and more likely to think, "The government employment man found me this job." His gratitude may in effect be transferred from the farmer to the Farm Placement Service. The dependence of the farm worker upon the farmer is thought to be lessened by the fact that U.S.E.S. exists. Now the farm worker can learn of several places where his help is wanted, and some of the employers are offering more wages than the farm employer is able to pay. These threads of thought partially explain why many farmers say that WPA has "ruined" a man or that the workers U.S.E.S. has to offer are "no good," why there are undercurrents of hostility toward U.S.E.S. in some areas. In the following comments of farmers, one may recognize the thought that U.S.E.S. lessens the farmers prerogatives or changes the bargaining position of the farm worker:

"Many U.S.E.S. workers are transients and are not good. Some are troublemakers for labor already hired - caused a strike in 1937."

"No, I don't like their program."

"No. I want to see the man first."

"When a farmer has to go to one of these employment offices, he might as well quit - too much government interference."

"The men are less ready to stay on the farm - have to go off on a spree every so often. And my last man just left entirely."

"People that they're getting through the agency are no good because they won't be bossed."

"Well, I've heard of other farmers getting them from there, but the men were never worth much. They were town men or city men and they never worked out very well."

"No. We'll try it alone awhile. That kind ain't no good anyhow."

"No. The government is digging into things too much - into the farmer's affairs."

"No. I don't care an awful lot for these fellows out of an employment agency."



A BELIEF THAT U.S.E.S. OFFICES ARE TOO REMOTELY SITUATED was frequently expressed by farmers. It is difficult for many farmers to describe in a letter the types of workers they want to hire, many farm homes do not have telephones, tires are wearing thin, and U.S.E.S. offices, situated in county seat towns as a rule, often seem remote. In June when this survey was made, the appointment of volunteer representatives in farm communities was not widespread and farmers spoke of such an arrangement in only one county surveyed. Illustrative of this attitude are the following replies of farmers when asked if they had sought workers this spring from the U.S.E.S.:

"No. The office is at Blackfoot, 45 miles away - too far away."

"No. I never go to Alamosa where the office is situated."

"No. It's too far away."

"No. The U.S.E.S. office is 40 miles away."

"No. It's easier to obtain workers by direct contact with neighbors."

"No, because its too much trouble and expense transporting workers back and forth from town."

"No. I can't drive all the way to Sacramento. I like to get local people - no housing."

"Not yet. How am I going to go to San Jose? I need tires for my car."

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF U.S.E.S. AND ITS FARM PLACEMENT SERVICE keeps many farmers from even considering the utilization of this Service. This lack of knowledge of the agency undoubtedly is an important factor in restricting the clientele of U.S.E.S. in rural areas, where many farmers simply do not think about going to these offices when they need workers. Approximately one farmer in 10 among those interviewed appeared to be completely uninformed about U.S.E.S. and its Farm Placement Service. Lack of immediate personal contacts with U.S.E.S. personnel may explain in part why so many of these farmers said, "I didn't think of it," or "I didn't know about it." Illustrative of these comments are the following:

"I don't know of any such place."

"I didn't think of that office."

"I didn't know where they are and never had any contact with them."

"Looks like there should be something like that."

"No. I didn't know about it."

"Never heard of the place."



WHAT MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN TO BRING ABOUT THE MORE FAVORABLE ATTITUDES  
ESSENTIAL TO WIDER USE OF THE FARM PLACEMENT SERVICE OF THE U.S.E.S.?

1. Plans for appointing voluntary representatives of the U.S.E.S. in each rural community should be helpful if these plans can be carried out rapidly, making sure that the representatives chosen are widely known and that they are acceptable to all classes of farmers. These plans might be carried out in cooperation with County Agricultural War Boards, an arrangement which worked very successfully in one of the counties surveyed.

This plan is directly in line with farmers' hiring habits - inquiring of neighbors and going only short distances to find workers. This should reduce greatly the part played by distance as an obstacle to wider use of the Service. It should also help to break down feelings of hostility and indifference toward the agency by identifying it with persons who are favorably regarded.

The one county in which the appointment of community representatives had proceeded furthest was also the one in which the greatest number of favorable comments were heard among farmers about U.S.E.S. Consider the following statements made by farmers in that county:

"Yes, the service was good. The Office tried to supply as good men as were available."

"Yes, they did all they could do."

"Yes, the sub-office in Gibbon in 1941 was very satisfactory."

"Yes, the office did the best they could to supply workers."

"Yes, I'm completely satisfied with workers sent by U.S.E.S."

"Yes. However, the man had to be trained in farm operations, but he has turned out satisfactorily."

2. Measures might be taken to induce more farm workers to register with U.S.E.S. This agency is aided in supplying workers to urban employers by the fact that workers covered by unemployment compensation plans must report to U.S.E.S. offices once a month while receiving compensation payments as a condition for eligibility. Since farm laborers as a group are excluded categorically from benefits under the Unemployment Compensation Program, there is no similar incentive for them to report to U.S.E.S. offices.



Farmers cannot compete with war industries in the matter of wage payments. Few occupations are less attractive than farm work since few involve such low annual earnings, such long hours of work, and so little security. If legislation cannot be enacted now to include farm workers in social security programs, perhaps it would be possible to obtain the benefits of the food and cotton stamp plans for them in periods of seasonal unemployment.

At present most seasonal migratory farm laborers are barred from the stamp plans by their frequent changes of residence which make them ineligible to relief status in most states. The food stamp plan would require modification in the case of unmarried seasonal farm workers for whom food subsidy payments would need to be redeemable in most instances at restaurants rather than at grocery stores. Modification might involve redemption of stamps by restaurants, limiting menus to surplus foods, and exchange of stamps by restaurants for foods on the surplus list. If measures are taken to make farm workers eligible for food and cotton stamps, monthly reporting to U.S.E.S. offices might be made a condition for eligibility.

3. Federal funds might be made available to FSA permitting that agency to greatly expand its farm labor camp program. If this were done, U.S.E.S. would be in a much better position next year to recruit workers in larger numbers for referral to farmers in counties where labor shortages occurred this year, and where they can be expected to recur with increased severity in 1943. Many farmers do not have housing facilities for regular farm workers' families needed to replace sons drawn into the armed forces and into war industries, and many are not in a position to incur heavy costs for housing seasonal workers needed only a few months in the year.
4. Federal funds might be made available for paying the costs of transporting farm workers where the distances involved are less than 200 miles, setting as conditions for eligibility that the workers shall report to U.S.E.S. offices upon arrival in the county, and that they be referred by that agency to prospective employers. Instances were found in the present survey of shortages of labor in some counties while supplies of farm labor were more than ample in other counties less than 200 miles away. Shortages of tires and gasoline are reducing the mobility of workers even for short distances.

Farmers can be expected to be very reluctant to incur costs for transporting workers, particularly in view of the fact that one of the most frequent complaints made by farmers against workers obtained from U.S.E.S. is that they often do not stay until the work for which they are hired is completed. How farmers would regard arrangements calling for them to pay costs of transportation can be readily anticipated, particularly in cases where workers have left them after a day or so in the fields.



The time required to make arrangements for payment of transportation by farmers might readily be prohibitive, particularly in counties where labor shortages are not anticipated far in advance, as was the case in some of the counties included in this survey. By the time farmers were able to reach an agreement about distribution of costs, the workers they were planning to have transported might well have changed their minds or found other jobs - this happened in one of the counties surveyed.

5. A Farm Placement Service needs favorable publicity. Perhaps the most effective way to obtain this soon enough to help much in 1943 would be to utilize voluntary community representatives as a medium of publicity. News stories in county newspapers giving names of farmers who are acting as representatives would help to bring recognition that their job is important. Community representatives, once appointed, could be encouraged to talk with their neighbors about U.S.E.S. and what it is seeking to do to help farmers obtain workers. In doing this, it would be essential to guard against over-statement about what this agency can do with the limited funds and resources it has for farm placement work.

In the long run, the most effective method of gaining support for U.S.E.S. in rural communities is to render the best possible service to farmers and to depend upon favorable statements of the farmers themselves as a means of publicity. Although statements made by farmers interviewed in this survey were preponderantly negative, favorable statements were sometimes made by farmers who had obtained satisfactory workers and service from U.S.E.S. Attitudes of indifference and hostility toward U.S.E.S. are likely to give way to more favorable attitudes to the extent that farmers hear their neighbors make statements such as the following:

"The workers were satisfactory."

"Last year the State Employment did their best to help us."

"They did all they possibly could to find someone, but you can't get laborers when there are none."

"Yes, I got one of the workers there - a very good worker."

"Yes, the office did all it could to supply labor."

"I've got some damn good workers. I've gotten good and bad - Guess their judgment is as good as mine."

"Yes, as a beginning and first effort. I think U.S.E.S. did well this year to start with and will become more effective."



6. Farm placement personnel of U.S.E.S. might be encouraged to spend more time interviewing farmers on their farms. This would not only provide these placement men with a better knowledge of the types of workers individual farmers want to hire, but would also aid greatly in reducing attitudes of indifference and hostility toward this agency. Unless farmers do have direct personal contacts with U.S.E.S. personnel, they are unlikely to think of this agency when they need workers, nor to have enough confidence in its personnel to ask their assistance in hiring.

It is probable that most farmers would be pleased to have local representatives of U.S.E.S. call on them, particularly if they came asking for the farmers' suggestions on how U.S.E.S. could do most to help them find the workers they will need in 1943. Shortage of tires, as an obstacle to such a plan, might be overcome by having the U.S.E.S. representatives travel with county agents, AAA representatives or other agricultural personnel on days when they are going into the field.

7. USDA, particularly through its County War Boards, might give more attention in publicity programs to giving farmers a clearer understanding of what to expect in the way of a labor supply during the war. It is thought that this might make farmers less critical of the marginal workers who remain available to agriculture, whether obtained through U.S.E.S. or otherwise. Farmers are depriving themselves of their only available sources of labor when they refuse, as many of them do, to train high school boys and other persons not normally in the farm labor force. Too many farmers are saying about these workers, "I'd pay to have them stay off the place."

More attention might also be given in publicity programs to informing farmers of the necessity for planning in advance to take care of labor needs. In some of the counties surveyed local U.S.E.S. representatives said that they had been unable to supply enough workers because they had not been notified by farmers of their labor requirements until it was too late to do anything about them. Arrangements for augmenting the labor supply in a county take more time than is available when farmers wait until the day before they need help and then all call at once for workers. One farmer summed up the situation very well when he told an interviewer, "You know how we are - we only go looking around when we need workers," although he might have added the word "immediately."



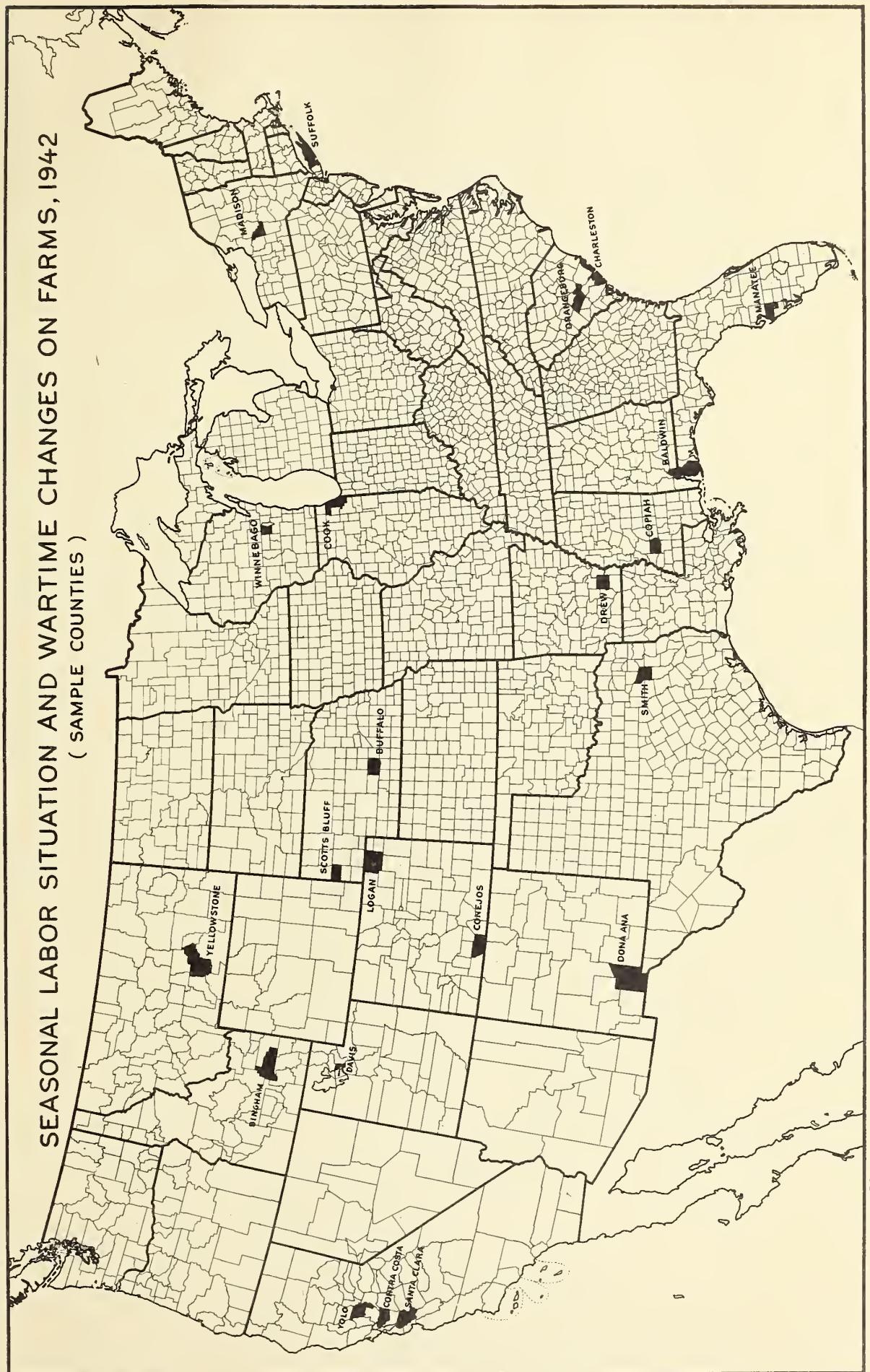
8. Arrangements might be made whereby U.S.E.S. would receive more assistance from teachers of vocational agriculture in its program to supply high school boys as farm workers in vacation periods. To teach boys specializing in agriculture how to judge stock, test seed, rotate crops, and perform other operations essential to good future farm managers is important. But to teach a greater number of boys how to milk cows, harness horses, drive tractors, and cultivate corn would do more now to help farmers meet wartime food production requirements.

More attention might be given to making arrangements whereby boys who are willing to work on farms in the summer months will obtain some experience on farms of their prospective employers before the busiest periods come, since at such times farmers are disposed to feel that it is impossible to take time out to instruct and supervise untrained farm workers.

Unless vigorous measures are taken soon, there seems little doubt that the farm labor supply-demand situation will continue to be disorganized next year. Can agriculture meet the needs of the Nation and its allies for food if this situation continues?



SEASONAL LABOR SITUATION AND WARTIME CHANGES ON FARMS, 1942  
( SAMPLE COUNTIES )



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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